

1637
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE

Rev. Mr. WESLEY'S CHAPEL, in *Bristol*,

On SUNDAY, the 30th of January 1791,

On Occasion of the DEATH of the

Rev. J. EASTERBROOK,

VICAR of TEMPLE, and ORDINARY of NEWGATE
in the same City.

By Mr. HENRY MOORE.



L O N D O N :

Printed and sold at the New Chapel, City-Road; and at
the Rev. Mr. WESLEY'S Preaching-Houses, in Town
and Country. 1791.

[Price TWO-PENCE.]

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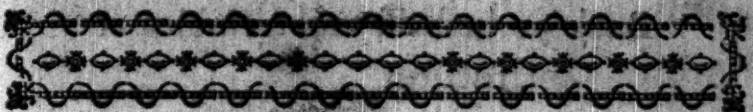
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A S E R M O N, &c.

I S A I A H lvii. 1, 2.

The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.

A Wise * Heathen has declared death to be "the most terrible of all terribles." And such it is to all who are not *born again to a lively hope*. They are, on this account, *all their life long subject to bondage*. The violence of the other passions may sometimes suspend this fear, and make a man rush into danger, as a *horse into the battle*. But when he can think, the soul shrinks,

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" Back

* Aristotle.

“ Back on herself, and trembles at destruction.”

It is also true, that death is generally spoken of in the Old Testament with a melancholy air. Even good men in that day do not seem to have

“ Gloried in dissolution near.”

Hezekiah is a remarkable instance of this, Chap. xxxviii. The dread of death, though not of “ something after death,” (that certainly belongs to those who know not God) seems to have had a great effect upon him.

But the gospel of Christ, by its greater light, takes away this gloom. We look through death to the resurrection, and shout, *O death where is thy sting ! O grave where is thy victory !* Ye Destroyers of the Human Race ! Ye, who are accustomed to conquer, and have made the earth a *field of blood*, ye shall fall before him we worship ! Christ, in his *glorious* manifestation, *shall destroy those who have thus destroyed the earth !*

Then

Then shall death be swallowed up in victory. Our Joshua will say to his risen saints, as he now says by anticipation to all his adopted sons, Come hither, and put your feet on the necks of these kings! There shall then be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things, it shall then be said, are passed away.

But this life is hid from the world: both, the life of grace, and the life of glory. So, that we also may say with the Prophet, *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart.* But, we may add too with him, and, blessed be God, with brighter evidence, *He shall enter into peace. They shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.*

These words seem to me to be strikingly proper for the present occasion. We have to lament the removal of a burning and shining Light from the Church Militant: But, we *sorrow not as those without hope.* "We count not the life of the Just to be madness, or his end to be without honour. We know he is numbered with the sons of God, and his lot is with the saints."

I shall, first, with the Lord's assistance, give some explanation of the passage, and shew how it is fulfilled in the death of every righteous person. And then, secondly, speak of the very exemplary Life, and happy Death of the pious and useful Minister lately gone to his reward.

"The righteous." Not merely those who do good. Men have various motives for doing good. St. Paul tells us that a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet be nothing profited: consequently may not be righteous. No, righteousness, like wisdom (James iii. 17.) cometh from above. It is the work of God. As all have sinned, so God commandeth all men every where to repent, and believe in Him who is the propitiation for our sins. This is the righteousness of God, his way of making sinners righteous. So says St. John, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

When a man becomes righteous, doing good immediately follows. Therefore the righteous are called, immediately after,
"merciful"

“merciful men.” God is their Father and their Life: therefore they are righteous. And they are *merciful* too. They have this particular resemblance of their Father, as well as that which is more general. *They put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies.* They see the misery of man. They see him lying in the Wicked One. Hence they strive to save souls from death, and so to hide a multitude of sins. And they feel the misery of the body too. They feel another’s woe, and learn the luxury of doing good. *They know God loveth a cheerful and plenteous giver.* Therefore they are merciful, not in a Jewish proportion of their gains, as the manner of some is, for which there is no authority in the New Testament; but as their merciful God has bidden them. They are *merciful after their power.* Yea, they are *merciful, as their Father who is in heaven is merciful.* They are willing to communicate, glad to distribute, laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life.

And yet these "*perish*," says the Prophet. He does not seem to have had in view the *violent* death of any good man. He does not seem, in all the context, to speak of those, who are sometimes called to *resist unto blood, striving against sin*. But merely their failing from the earth, called immediately after, their being "*taken away*;" while many of the ungodly were spared; so that he was in danger, as *Elijah* had said before, of being *left alone*. The *righteous*, says he, *perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart*.

"*No man*," that is, no man comparatively. The world are laying to heart what strike the senses. The wonders of faith do not this. What claims the attention of all heaven, the conversion of a sinner, or the death of a member of Christ, is lightly esteemed by those whose life is *earthly, sensual, or devilish*. While, on the contrary, what is highly esteemed among men is an *abomination to God*.

"*Merciful men are taken away*." Not their souls required of them, as the rich fool
in

in the Gospel, or proscribed as *Balthazzar*. They are taken away by God their Father "*from the evil to come.*"

Sometimes this is *national*. God then removes many of his children from it, especially those of a tender spirit. But this evil is more commonly *personal*. They are removed from *sorrow* and *pain*.

1. From pain. This is an evil, notwithstanding what proud and brutal Stoics have said of it. It is unnatural; and never designed of God for man: and never would have been permitted but for sin, which brought it into the world. Now the righteous are often exercised with pain. But God, *after they have suffered for a while*, takes them away from this, to the *house eternal in the heavens*, where pain shall never come.

2. The merciful man is taken away from *sorrow*. He found abundant cause for this here below. Such are often in *heaviness*, through manifold temptations. On account of the world, the church, their own family, themselves. The mercy of God is great to them, especially in death. They are

taken away just when it is best for those who depart, and for those who remain.

"*He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds.*" The latter clause is generally understood to refer to the body. This shall rest in its clay-cold bed, till the morning of the resurrection: meantime in his book are all their members written. The grave may be called the *bed* of the body, as the death of good men in Scripture is called *sleep*. So of Stephen we are told, that he having prayed for his murderers, whom he had just before so plainly re-proved, added, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!*" And having said this, says St. Luke, *he fell asleep*. The body sinks; but the believer cries out, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!* So the eyes are closed. But who can tell how they are opened in Eternity? There all is God! Made meet for the inheritance, the immortal spirit,

" Claps the glad wing, and tours away,
And mingles with the blaze of day."

No

No sleep to the soul ! That wretched notion of some, who are wedded to *philosophy and vain deceit !* No. *To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord,* (2 Cor. iv. 8.) And the rich man, *Lazarus,* * and the dying thief, † are demonstrations of this truth.

"He shall enter into peace." In this world many are the afflictions of the righteous. But how different the house of God ? There,

*"No horrid alarum of war
Shall break his eternal repose."*

So says the voice from heaven, (Rev. xiv. 13.) *Blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them.*

They have not laboured in vain, as every man of the world has. If he has gained the whole world, all that is called good and great, what does it now profit him ? He is come to the fearful brink ! What is behind ? A moment ! What is before ? Eternity ! But they do not agree. The moment was given to the world. His was occupied in the *desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life.* Before

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him

* Luke xvi. 25. † Luke xxiii. 43.

him is the world of Spirits. God is there !
And " Vanities are vain no more ! " In his
presence nothing can come, that *worketh an
abomination, or maketh a lie.*

How different the prospect of the righ-
teous man ! He also sees a moment be-
hind, and eternity before. But they agree.
The moment was given to God, and now
he goes to God. *Faith* has prepared him
for *sight*, and *hope* for *enjoyment*. His rea-
son, his senses fail. But they had failed
before. *Faith, the evidence of things not seen,
had brought them into captivity to the obedience
of Christ.* By this faith

" The things unknown to feeble sense,
Unseen by reason's glimmering ray,
With strong commanding evidence,
Their heavenly origin display."

And now the holy to the holiest leads. He
is *meet for the inheritance among the saints in
light.* There the wicked cease from troubling,
there the weary are at rest. And not only so :
In his presence is *fulness of joy*, and at his
right-hand pleasures for evermore.

" Each one walking in his uprightness."
In the glory, which is the gracious reward
of

of his uprightness. *All, who ascend into that holy place, walk in the robe washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, (Rev. vii. 14.)* Hence they heartily join in the anthem of heaven, Rev. xxi. 9. *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.*

But there seems to be something peculiar in these words, "*Each one walking in his uprightness.*" *In my Father's house, says Christ, there are many mansions.* We cannot see why there should be many, if all entered into the same degree of the joy of their Lord. No, as there is one glory of the Sun, and another of the Moon, and another of the Stars, even so is the Resurrection of the Dead. There are peculiar rewards for those who have been most holy, most laborious, and greatest sufferers in their Master's cause. That the labour of such is not in vain in the Lord, (though they say, *Not I, but the grace of God which was in me,*) is evident from many passages of Holy Writ. With regard to labour, St. Paul says, *Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour. (1 Cor. iii. 8.)* And what a wonderful description have we of those who are eminently holy, (Rev. xiv. 1.)

And

And I looked, and lo! a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These were redeemed from among men, first fruits unto God, and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God!

That sufferers in his righteous cause shall also for the light affliction which is but for a moment, receive a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, is thus magnificently described, Rev. xx. 4. *And I saw thrones, and they that sat on them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, (and by parity of reason, those who have suffered in other respects shall receive proportionably,) and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again, till the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Let this mean what it will beside,*

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it evidently expresses the great happiness of those, who

" Faithful to death the cross endure,
And make the crown by suffering sure."

Thus, each one walks in his *uprightness*. A beautiful word! Labour is nothing, suffering is nothing, if not the consequence of uprightness. We may avoid both where duty calls not. In this sense also *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that giveth the crown of life to him who is faithful unto death: who hateth his life in this world, that he may preserve it unto life eternal.*

So are the words fulfilled in every righteous person. So were they fulfilled in the late eminent servant of God, so well known, and so highly valued in this city.

There is no need that I should this day, (like *Samuel*, in the case of *Saul*, 1 Sam. xv. 30, 31,) honour an unfaithful and rejected man, before the people, on account of his station: No. He was *a righteous man*. He had put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. And he had put on the new man, which is created after God in
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righteousness and true holiness. He was not content with *making clean the outside of the cup.* Though he was, as all his friends testify, of a very unblamable behaviour from his youth, yet this satisfied him not. He felt that "corruption of nature, whereby man is gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit." And therefore he prest after those *great and precious promises, by which we are made partakers of the divine nature.* He was renewed in the *spirit of his mind;* a child of God, by faith: *the Spirit itself bearing witness with his spirit, that he was a child of God.*

And his conversation was as becometh the Gospel of Christ. He adorned the Gospel of God his Saviour. In this respect he triumphed over those, who *speak evil of the things that they know not.* When, in a remarkable case * that occurred nearly three years ago, his Divine Master had greatly honoured him, *those on the contrary part were ashamed, having no evil thing to say of him.*

* See the case of George Lukins, published by Mr. Easterbrook.

him. They could cry out, "Fanatic! Enthusiast!" for this is easily done, and supplies the want of argument. But, even keen-eyed jealousy could fix no blot upon him, either as a christian, or in his ministerial character. But nevertheless in this he gloried not. The language of his heart was,

"Whate'er in me seems wise, or good,
Or just, I here disclaim;
I wash my garments in the blood
Of the atoning Lamb!"

The righteous, says Solomon, is bold as a lion. Such was Mr. Easterbrook. He added to his faith, virtue, ~~the~~ ^{an}aptness, courage. God had not given to him the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. His faith was that which overcometh the world. He could say, when tempted to fear or shame,

"To him I turn my steady face,
Want, pain defy, enjoy disgrace,
Glory in dissolution near!"

As a fruit of this, a noble ingenuousness was manifest in him. As he renounced the
hidden

hidden things of darkness, so he walked not in cunning craftiness. Even a superficial observer might see, that he was a man that had a window in his breast. He spake the truth from his heart. Guile, as a wise and good man has observed, is good for nothing but sin, and cannot be needed while we have a single eye. His whole behaviour was a comment on this. By manifestation of the truth, he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

And he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: not even where it is attended with most of its original reproach. His spirit was truly catholic. He also could say, Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? If it be, give me thy hand. He remembered the word of his blessed Master, Whosoever doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my mother, my sister, and brother.

And he was truly a merciful man. This was the distinguishing part of his character. He also, like his Master, delighted in mercy, and judgment: any severity was his strange work. His Ministerial Office seemed to
him

him (what it really is) only a means of more effectually dispensing that mercy, which belongs to the christian character: and of which the souls and bodies of men so greatly stand in need, while in this vale of misery and tears.

He accordingly thus exercised it. The merciful God, previous to his call to the Ministry, had opened his eyes to see the *world lying in the wicked one*. He therefore laboured to pluck them as brands out of the burning: to snatch them from the verge of hell. And as he saw the worth of souls, so he was not satisfied with the usual stated ministrations; but *from house to house, taught, reprov'd, and exhorted, with all long-suffering*. Even this did not satisfy his enlarged heart. He undertook a work of mercy, which surprized even the most religious of his friends. *Boasting, in him, was excluded*. But it should not be hid, *That he actually preached a Sermon in every house, in his very large parish!* This work took him (I think, he told me,) about two years. But it shall never be forgotten. *It shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory,*

glory, at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he felt the misery of the *body* too. He was in this respect also a merciful man. He was a dispenser of the *goods*, as well as of the *faith* of Christ. *The sorrowful sighing of the prisoners*, who were also his charge, came up before him. In this also he shewed himself a Member of Christ. Indeed his whole life, as it is well known, was one continued act of mercy to the souls and bodies of men. Like *Joseph* to the famishing Egyptians, the miserable found him a ready friend, and an able advocate. He counted not his substance, or his life, dear to himself. The language of his heart was,

“Thy mind throughout my life be shewn,
While list’ning to the wretch’s cry;
The widow’s and the orphan’s groan,
On mercy’s wings I swiftly fly,
The poor and helpless to relieve,
My life, my all, for them to give.”

It is well known that he abridged himself in all his necessary expences; and denied himself many of the lawful comforts of life, that he might relieve the destitute. And, when

when all the worldly goods which his station in the Church put him in possession of, had failed; the merciful Lord, whose spirit had excited him, stirred up many to assist him in this labour of love. He saw, like *Elijah, the meal continue, and the oil fail not.* And, as the bread, blessed by the Master, grew in the hands of the disciples, who distributed to the famishing multitude; so his mite, given to God in the poor, continually encreased, and the thanksgiving of many redounded to the honour and praise of God. O! could I bring before you the prisoners, and the afflicted of every sort, to whom he was a restorer of life and comfort!—But there is no need. The Lord, whom he served, will bring them before assembled worlds. Yet a little while, and we shall see the *great white throne, and him that sitteth thereon.* And before him shall be gathered all nations. And he shall separate them, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. Then shall this merciful man stand at his right hand. And to him, with the other children of mercy, shall the Lord say, *Come ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.*

world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink. I was naked and ye cloathed me; I was sick and in prison, and ye came unto me. “But why, (as a Minister of Christ has observed*) does not our blessed Lord mention works of spiritual mercy? He could not do it with any propriety. It was not for him to say, “I was in error, and ye convinced me; I was in sin, and ye brought me back to God.” And it needeth not; for in mentioning *some*, he included *all* works of mercy.

But, this burning and shining Light was given to the world only for a short time. His great and continual labours, with too great a neglect of himself, brought on, nearly a year ago, a general weakness. This increased more and more, notwithstanding the best medical assistance; and at last took him out of this world to his eternal reward, on the twenty-first day of January 1791, in the fortieth year of his age.

From the month of August last, I visited him constantly; indeed for my own profit,

as

* Mr. Wesley, in his Sermon before the Humane Society.

as well as through unfeigned respect for so excellent a character. I found him always the same, invariably patient, resigned, and thankful. His friends who, with the poor, longed for his life, were full of hope for his recovery. He himself seemed at times to think that he should be restored. But his constant language was, "The Lord is wise. The Lord is good. The Lord will do all things well." When his weakness became extreme, he thought much of death. Yet, if ever he seemed recalled to any expectation of life, it seemed, like the great Apostle, (Philippians i. 23, 24,) to be excited by his unspeakable love to his flock at large, and especially the children of his faith and prayer. With what tenderness have I heard him say, "My Flock! My Flock! I would live for them! But thy will be done! O that the Lord would send them a Pastor after his own heart! To him I commend them."

He grew at last so very weak, that he could not converse. He could only utter a sentence now and then. His last words to me were, "God does all things well. His will be done, I have no fear, I fear not

not death: I fear not judgment. Then, after a pause, he added these remarkable words, "I *delight* in the thought of judgment! I know my interest in the Judge; and I know I shall stand before him with joy!"

Thus died, as he lived; full of faith and love, the Rev. *Joseph Easterbrook*. But, shall it be said of his death also, That *no man layeth it to heart*? Rather, we will hope that his memory will be blessed. That many will be provoked thereby to give themselves to Him, who gave Himself for them, the Just for the Unjust, to bring them to God. And that his Flock especially will cry mightily to the God of their late honoured Pastor, that he may provide for their spiritual profit. That he may again *give liberally and upbraid not*. That he may still guide their feet into the way of peace: and that they may be followers of him who is gone before, as he was of Christ: To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever!

15 JY 64

F I N I S.